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Letter dated 2 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the attached letter from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces dated 1 May 2017 (see annex).

I would be most grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as an official document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**

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Annex to the letter dated 2 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you on a matter of grave concern to draw your attention to the deteriorating situation of civilians in eastern Damascus and eastern Ghutah as the Assad regime continues its military campaign in the area undeterred. Not only does the onslaught constitute a violation of international resolutions and the internationally sponsored ceasefire, but it also exacerbates the already dire circumstances of a large civilian population that has been suffering under Assad's illegal siege for years.

On 18 February 2017, the regime launched a military campaign in neighbourhoods in eastern Damascus, especially Qabun and Barza, in total disregard of the ongoing efforts to revive the political process and reinforce the ceasefire. The campaign has used all sorts of indiscriminate weapons and bombardment on civilian areas, including banned incendiary ammunition. This has forced hundreds of families to flee the area, mostly towards eastern Ghutah, already under siege for four years. The ongoing clashes and bombardment have further taken their toll on health facilities in the area, depriving civilians in the area of essential health care. Further, civilians displaced owing to the ongoing military campaign are living in dire circumstances, having to take shelter in mosques and parks in more stable areas of Barza or move towards eastern Ghutah, where the population is already suffering under siege. The regime has also taken control of all supply lines through which vital living necessities used to be transported to eastern Ghutah, which has tightened the siege on the large civilian population there and has caused essential goods to either grow much more expensive or go missing altogether. The regime has, in addition, targeted a livestock project for food security in the area in a clear, deliberate attempt to starve the population.

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces believes that the regime's use of these tactics is outrageous. Not only do they constitute a blatant breach of the ceasefire and a continuation of internationally prohibited siege tactics, but they also show that the regime continues to pursue a military approach in total disregard of international efforts to reach a political solution in Syria.

We believe that the regime has been emboldened by the continued failure by the international community to compel the regime to comply with articles 12, 13 and 14 of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). No credible political process has any chance of bringing the conflict in Syria to an end if the regime is allowed to continue unchecked.

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces calls upon your Organization as a major actor in the Syrian issue and a faithful friend of the Syrian people to call for an emergency meeting to discuss this urgent matter. Pressure must be put on the Assad regime, especially through its ally in the Security Council, to cease these practices immediately. Further, the Assad regime must be held to account for this and all of its outrageous crimes against the Syrian people.

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces counts on your immediate decisive action on this matter.

(*Signed*) Anas **Abdah**
President
National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces